



Planning Commission Minutes of July 27, 2016 Meeting

1670 Flat River Road
Coventry, RI 02816

Meeting Called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Russell Crossman.

Members Present: Chairman Crossman, Vice-Chairman Nunes, Mr. Bouchard, Mr. Crowe, Mr. Kalunian, Mr. Mattson, Mr. Osenkowski, and Ms. Fagan-Perry

Members Absent: Secretary Flynn

Also Present: Planning Director Paul Sprague, Matt Sarcione - Assistant Planner, and Robert A. Joyal - P.E. - Town Engineer; Attorney Veronica Assalone and Attorney Dianne Izzo

Mr. Crossman reviewed the exits in the room in case of an emergency.

Approval of Minutes:
June 22, 2016

Ms. Fagan-Perry made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Matson seconded. All members were in favor. Motion passed.

Before moving on to business, Planning Director Sprague introduced the Town of Coventry's new Assistant Planner Matt Sarcione to the Planning Commission (PC) and the public. The PC welcomed Mr. Sarcione.

OLD BUSINESS

The first item of new business was:

Pre-Application: **"Summit 55 Housing Project"**; Summit General Store LTD
10 Proposed Age Restricted Units (+55) Consisting of 5 Buildings, Each with Two, 2-Bedroom Units
AP 316, Lot 27; Zone VRC
28 Old Summit Road

Mr. Crossman asked if anyone would be representing the applicant. At this time Mr. Thomas Cronin from the Law Offices of Nolan, Brunero, Cronin & Ferrara LTD., of 1070 Main Street, Coventry, RI 02816 answered that he is representing on behalf of the applicant. This is the second time before the PC for a pre-application hearing for this applicant. This is a condominium proposal for the Village of Summit and for people age 55 and over. It is on the corner of Route 117 and Old Summit Road and is 6.8 acres in a Village Rural Commercial (VRC) Zone. The proposal consists of building single story, duplex style condominiums that would be on a public

well but with individual septic systems. The original plan presented called for 10 units with 5 buildings but due to the concerns from the PC, the applicant has reduced the number of units to 8, with 4 buildings and an increase in parking. Each unit will have two beds and a 2 car garage. Currently the plan meets all the frontage and setbacks requirements for a VRC Zone. The plan meets the 35 ft. height restrictions and has so far complied with DEM regarding the flagged wetland buffer. Mr. Cronin suggested that by decreasing the number of units from 10 to 8, the applicant has addressed the PC's primary concerns of the 40,000 sq. foot minimum lot area. This also offers a balance to the variety of existing housing in town. The remainder of the project remains consistent regarding the well, and entrance and exit on Rt. 117.

Ms. Fagan commended the reduction, however, with one of the lots backing up to the wetlands she inquired if a new wetlands delineation and site suitability from DEM had been done. Mr. Cronin said that they will be.

Chairman Crossman reviewed that the applicant has been before the board before, and did revise the plan according to the PC's direction and questioned if the PC was comfortable with the changes and moving forward.

Ms. Fagan asked at what stage the well installation would take place and articulated her concerns about units' proximity to the salt dome. Mr. Sprague said that the testing for the well would happen at Master Plan. All agreed that would happen.

Mr. Osenkowski further commented that he has concerns about the wetlands and density of the project. Even with the DEM permitting process he is troubled by the prospect of the project encroaching upon the wetlands. Both he and Member Fagan stated that they would much prefer a general store on this property.

Next on the Agenda:

Pre-Application: "Coventry Solar"; Deepwater Wind, LLC
Development Plan Review of Proposed Solar Array
AP 308, Lot 28; Zone RR5
323 Hopkins Hollow Road

Noticing the large number of the public in attendance, Chairman Crossman stated that tonight's pre app by Deepwater Wind was not a public hearing. They may make public comment at the end of the meeting. There will be forums for a public hearing with both planning and zoning, but the process has not reached that stage yet.

Mr. Crossman asked if anyone would be representing the applicant. Christian Capiezza an environmental attorney with the law firm of Shechtman Halperin Savage of 1080 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI was present on behalf of Deepwater Wind for the pre-application review of the solar project. He has been in practice for over 15 years. The Coventry project is a 3.75 megawatt high level project on a 40 acre parcel. The site visit was June 29, 2016. He then introduced Ed Avizinis, a Wetlands Biologist and Soil Scientist from Natural Resources Services (NRS) in Burrellville who attended the site visit. Mr. Avizinis said that following the site visit they did adjust the location of the road to further south for utility hook up.

Ms. Fagan and Mr. Crossman stated that the site visit revealed the place to be a dilapidated old church camp. Mr. Sprague then informed the PC that Deepwater Wind had prepared a presentation for the PC.

Mr. Capiezza then introduced the presenter Curt Mayland from Deepwater Wind. He presented a slide presentation of examples of solar fields to give the PC some perspective. The first example was of a solar panel field from Belchertown, MA that is about 1/3 the size of the proposed Coventry site. Mr. Mayland indicated that the grass will grow beneath the panels and the lawn will be mowed once a month as well as the fence line cleared, keeping maintenance at a minimum. The Coventry site will not be visible from the road or from the residences.

Mr. Mayland then presented a site in Cheshire MA that was an old gravel pit. He then presented a similar one in Hamden MA and explained the variations of racking systems of the solar panels and spacing to prevent shading of the panels. He went on to explain transformers and inverters. They are generally 6 ft. in height and placed on 3 separate cement pads. He stated they make no noise and have no impact.

Mr. Kalunian asked which slide that most related in scale to what the Coventry 3.75 megawatt footprint would be. Mr. Mayland indicated that the closest would be the Hamden site, although it is slightly bigger than Coventry. The panels would be stacked at about 3 ft. off the ground up to 10 ft. at the top edge. The panels are stacked in rows of strings with a width of 15 feet. There would be 3 10 x 20 ft. cement pads. Mr. Kalunian asked for the closest solar field to view live. Mr. Mayland said that there is one in an industrial park in Providence. Mr. Kalunian questioned if there was one in a similar rural residential site. Mr. Mayland said he felt that the Camp Greene was a good site as it's a 40 acre parcel, 20 of which would be paneled, which allows for ample buffer zones. He also pointed out that what with the rapid improvements of the new technology of solar power, by the time they are ready to install the fields the new grade of panels will be probably smaller but stronger and take up even less space. The soil impact is limited to the posts. The noise from the inverters is a 79 dba from 3 feet, so the brief calculation of noise would be a quiet whisper. That "noise" would only be during the day as the system does not operate during the night. The operation will be have a 6 foot chain link fence, be locked/gated and monitored remotely and have a box for fire and emergency personnel. When needed techs from the inverter company would come out and do maintenance. Maintenance agreement goes with company that builds it.

Mr. Osenkowski questioned if the existing buildings would be razed. Deepwater Wind will own the land and is still determining the structural integrity and demolition costs of the old camp buildings. Vice President of Permitting and Environmental Affairs Aileen Kenney for Deepwater and its partner will always be available overseeing the project. The buildings will most likely have to come down.

Mr. Osenkowski asked if there will be a need for additional infrastructure from National Grid. Mr. Mayland answered that there is a pole at the access road that will act as an interconnector with National Grid. There will be poles for a meter and a shutdown switch. Some poles just to carry wire, so probably 8 poles. There will be no extension to wind turbines. This site should provide power to about 500 homes.

Mr. Osenkowski then asked if the National Grid purchased the electricity or would it go back into the community. The program in RI is the Rural Energy Growth Program and is a long term contract between Deepwater Wind and the Grid. The actual electrons on the lines will go out to the most local users. Mr. Osenkowski encouraged Deepwater Wind to work closely with DEM to be sure that the local fish and species are protected. Mr. Mayland offered that they would like to keep the front 20 acres open to public for passive use and conservation.

Bob Joyal asked if the panels will be tracking or stationary. They will be stationary.

Mr. Cappiezza reminded the PC that the applicant requested that master and preliminary plans be combined. Mr. Crossman reminded him that that request is at the risk of the applicant. There will be one public hearing. Everything has to be engineered and it is a tight time frame. The Environmental Review (ERT) is always done at Master Plan and Mr. Crossman stressed that the PC may still have an outside consultant with the ERT process. The PC will still have all the rights of Masterplan.

Vice President of Permitting and Environmental Affairs Aileen Kenney for Deepwater came forward to comment on the risk of the combined plan and ERT. She then suggested having a combined preliminary and final. Mr. Crossman offered that he did not see how that could be possible as they would need all their permits and approvals. She felt that they would have the state approvals. Ms. Kenney said that they will review their plans and consider asking for Master Plan on August 24, 2016. Mr. Sprague advised that he will be on vacation August 24, 2016.

NEW BUSINESS

Preliminary Plan: “Hope View Highlands”; Coventry Land Company, LLC c/o Robert DeBlois
Proposed 3-Lot Minor Cluster Subdivision
AP 97, Lot 7, Zone RR2
Hope Furnace Road

Mr. Crossman asked if anyone present would be representing the applicant. Mr. Sanford J. Resnick of Resnick and Caffrey, 300 Centerville Rd, Warwick, RI came forward representing the applicant Robert DeBlois of 15 Dale Hill Drive Saunderstown.

The applicant has plans for a 3 lot cluster development and has more than the minimum requirement of open space. Mr. Resnick introduced Mr. Sam Suorsa of Coventry Survey who came forward to describe the 3 lot cluster and introduce the traffic study done by Paul Bannon of ARB Engineering. Mr. Suorsa used Mr. Bannon’s traffic study to place all the driveways and stated that each driveway had adequate visibility and sight distance.

Mr. Crossman inquired if they had submitted subdivision suitability to DEM. Yes they have and are awaiting approval. Mr. Suorsa asked if they could go forward with approval contingent on the DEM approval. Yes, they would get conditional approval and technically get preliminary approval once DEM approvals were in hand. Mr. Suorsa went on to discuss a problematic site distance issue with a proposed clear zone easement heading south 15 feet from the property line. Mr. Suorsa indicated the area where there would be a clear zone of boulders and vegetation.

Mr. Resnick had Mr. Bannon come forward to discuss the Traffic Study. He stated that ARB Engineers was hired to work with the site engineer to site the driveways for the project due the curvature of Hope Furnace Road. They did a speed study along property frontage and one further to the east. They used design speeds of 35-42 mph needing a 300 foot site distance. He went onto explain the placement of the driveways in relation to cresting and sloping of the road and requesting a clear site line at the sharp corner and that no fences or shrubberies may be installed there to obstruct view. They have called for leveling an embankment near the driveways to provide sufficient site distance.

Mr. Crossman referred to page 14 of Mr. Sprague's report of Bannon's *Traffic Analysis* regarding site distance and the recommendations and if that was accurate. Mr. Bannon said yes. Mr. Crossman asked about the abutting Picerne Property and if they had done the center line striping. Yes they have.

Mr. Kalunian asked for all the driveways to have the hammerhead turn out for safety. The applicant agreed to the request. Discussion followed regarding site distance and the speed limits and the location of driveways.

Mr. Sprague asked about the no cut buffer and the speed of vehicles. Is the buffer off the property line? Yes, it is 15-25 ft. parallel to the set back line and may be used as a sight line clear zone.

Mr. Kalunian inquired about the site distance easement. He prefers the easement to be in favor of the town as it favoring the land owners may lead to a dispute or enforcement issue. Also the town will be reliable about maintenance. Mr. Resnick said that he will see to the wording of it so that if the landowners do not respond in a timely manner after notice, the town may step in. Mr. Resnick reminded the PC that the applicant was asking for a waiver regarding the minimum requirement of 10 acres and this property is only 8.8 acres. Mr. Sprague explained that that zoning ordinance may be superseded by planning when there is a cluster development.

Mr. Kalunian and Ms. Fagan inquired about the open space. Mr. Resnick answered that it is the homeowners association. The homeowners may use and enjoy, may not build structures, but will follow the rules of the homeowners association.

Ms. Fagan expressed her concern that this project is in the Central Coventry Fire District and there are no fire hydrants out there. Will there be a cistern? Mr. Sprague suggested that the applicant work that out with Chief Lamb. Ms. Fagan also asked that all fire and town taxes be paid in full. Mr. Resnick assured that the taxes will be paid.

Mr. Kalunian made a motion that the PC approve the Preliminary Plan for the Proposed 3 Lot Minor Cluster Subdivision AP 97, Lot 7, RR-2 on Hope Furnace Road.

The proposed 3-lot Residential Cluster Subdivision is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan.

- *The Land Use Element of the Plan encourages higher density when the project is part of a Residential Cluster Development.*
- *The proposed project is consistent with the Open Space and Recreation Element of the Plan inasmuch as it provides contiguous open space.*

Negative Environmental Impacts

The proposed development will have no significant negative impact to the environment.

- *There are no wetlands on the property;*
- *Most of the open space is high and dry land.*

Access to Public Streets

- *Each of the proposed lots on the RCD will have permanent and adequate access to a public way.*

Stipulations

Waiver as to RCD Acreage

- *The subject parcel provides 4.5 acres of open space which is in excess of that required for a 10-acre RCD.*
- *The applicant's request for a waiver as to minimum area for an RCD is granted.*

Subdivision Suitability/OWTS

- *The applicant shall submit an approved Subdivision Suitability Determination and/or OWTS approval from RIDEM prior to Final Plan approval of the RCD subdivision.*

Traffic

- *The applicant and/or developer shall adhere to the recommendations of its Traffic Engineer as set forth in its "Sight Distance Analysis" to include appropriate grading and removal of vegetation within 25 feet of Hope Furnace Road;*
- *The applicant will record an easement to allow the town clear this area;*
- *All of the driveways are to have a hammerhead turn out design.*

Roof Runoff

- *The applicant/developer shall install roof runoff drainage systems on each of the dwellings.*

Open Space

- *If a Homeowner's Association is created it should provide for maintenance of the Open Space.*

The developer shall also secure from the central Coventry Fire Department with regard to fire protection and adequate water in the absence of a fire department.

Ms. Fagan seconded the motion.

Mr. Osenkowski asked that it be clear that the open space be delineated for passive recreation only.

Mr. Kalunian amended his motion to contain that the open space be used for passive recreation only. Ms. Fagan seconded the amended motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Resnick asked that the Final be done administratively. All agreed that would be fine.

Next on the agenda:

Recommendation to the Town Council: “**Abandonment of a Portion of Greene Street**”;

Nathanael Greene Homestead Assoc., Inc.

Petition to Abandon Unimproved Portion of Greene Street to Abutting Properties; General Nathanael Greene Homestead Assoc., Inc. & Glenn and Joy Martin

AP 55, Lots 86 & 88 & AP 55 Lot 85; Zone R20

50 Taft Street

Mr. Crossman asked if anyone present would be representing the applicant. Sam Suorsa of Coventry Surveys and Glenn Martin 17 Driftwood Drive. Mr. Suorsa explained that a portion of Greene St. runs out into Laurel Ave. The relevant portion is east of Taft St. and is unimproved. The abutting homeowners and the Nathanael Greene Homestead Assoc., Inc. all use this portion of Greene St for access to the walking paths to the river. All are looking to abandon this portion which will create 3 separate parcels. Parcel A would go to Glenn and Joy Martin, with Parcels B & C going to the Nathanael Greene Homestead Association which owns two separate lots.

Mr. Crossman explained that the applicant was present only to gain a recommendation from the PC to the Town Council. The Town Council is the only entity that may grant abandonments. If any neighbors have objections they can come to the Town Council meeting and be heard. Mr. Martin stated that he was happy with the request. Mr. Osenkowski asked if this would restrict public access. No, there are points of access to the walking trails from the Greenway.

Mr. Kalunian made the motion to make a recommendation to Town Council to abandon a portion of Greene Street as shown on the plan.

This portion of Greene St. abuts AP 55 Lots 86 & 88 & AP 55 Lot 85.

The "paper street" portion of Greene Street has ceased to be useful to the public.

The Planning Commission recommends that the Town Council abandon the "paper street" portion of Greene St. or undeveloped portion of Greene St. as set forth in the applicant's plans.

The Planning Commission has no objection to the Town Council waiving any future fees or taxes attributable to proposed abandonment street.

Mr. Bouchard seconded the motion.

Mr. Kalunian stated that this is the main way in and out for events at the N. Greene Homestead so this action will serve the public good by making this recommendation.

Motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning Commission Issues of Interest N/A

Public Works Director N/A

Planning Director Report Submitted

Public Comment

Mr. Crossman opened the meeting for public comment. Now comes David Hankins of 556 Lewis Farm Road. Mr. Hankins stated his concern about Solar Field off Hopkins Hollow Road. His concern is how much will have to be clear cut as he is an abutter and that the noise from the inverters will be a detriment to the quality of his family's life. He stated that he feels the placement of a solar farm in a rural setting is outrageous.

Now comes Arthur Rustigian of 401 Hopkins Hollow Road. He is an abutter and opposes the Solar Field project. He feels that he will be able to see it from his property. He referred to the Zoning Ordinance RR5 and its purpose to protect the natural historic, and cultural and scenic character of the town and its rural character. The solar farm is an inappropriate use.

Now comes Donna Rustigian of 401 Hopkins Hollow Road. She opposes the Solar Farm project and inquired if there was any information regarding the health consequences or research available of living near a 3.5 megawatt producer. The newness has sparked her concerns. Mr. Crossman said that they have provided all the information that they have. Mrs. Rustigian also expressed her concern for any wildlife that may be impacted.

Next comes Gayle Mitchell Slezak of 79 Nicholas Road. Ms. Slezak informed the commission that she was opposed to a solar field being placed in their backyards and woods. She has concern for a resident black bear. She suggested placing the solar field on Arnold Road or behind BJ's. She has a concern about runoff and informed the PC that the whole neighborhood will be out in force for the public hearing.

Next came Karen Carlson of 22 Waterman Hill Road spoke as a resident of Greene. She opposes the project and agrees with the previous comments. The Greene residents are not happy with the turbines and

are very concerned about the rural character of the neighborhood. Also what about first responders? The turbine agreement with Mr. Depasqaule has Warwick responding, not Coventry. She hopes that this will not be the case here. Why not put solar in Arnold Road land fill? She wants to keep Greene pristine.

Mr. Matson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bouchard seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Kathy Gray